

Media Information
2 October 2019

Heading for freedom in the BMW Isetta.

30 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, BMW recounts the story of the desire for freedom, ingenuity and engineering skill – the movie “The Small Escape” will premiere on 2 October 2019 on Youtube and in the social networks.

Munich. Thousands of exhibits in the Berlin Wall Museum on Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, commemorate the history of the once divided city, the tightly controlled border between East and West and the people who sought their way to freedom against all odds. On the upper floor near the window, which overlooks Checkpoint Charlie, there is the smallest escape car ever used: a BMW Isetta. Klaus-Günter Jacobi (79) regularly accompanies visitors through the museum as a tourist guide. What only few people are aware of: Jacobi does not only know all about many escape attempts, but that it was his idea to hide a person inside the tiny bubble car and to cross the border with the unnoticed passenger. This is how his best friend managed to escape from East to West Berlin. 30 years after the fall of the Berlin wall, BMW recounts the tale of Klaus-Günter Jacobi, his friend Manfred Koster and the mini-car, which helped nine people escape the GDR. This story is the plot of the movie “The Small Escape”, which will premiere on 2 October 2019 as a TV spot, on Youtube and on other social media channels of the BMW Group.

The elaborately produced blockbuster-style movie takes the audience back to the year 1964. Jacobi’s family had already left the East of the city in 1958, three years before the construction of the Berlin wall. When his old friend Manfred Koster asked him to help him escape from the GDR, he came up with a bold plan. His BMW Isetta was to serve as the escape car. The moto-coupé measuring only 2.30 meters in length and 1.40 meters in width would arouse little suspicion with the border soldiers, or so he hoped. And even today it stills seems virtually impossible to hide a person inside a BMW Isetta. The bubble car is already a very tight fit for two people on the seats directly behind the front door. The hiding place for his friend was built behind the seat bench directly next to the engine. Car mechanic Jacobi carried out the conversion in his former training workshop in Berlin-Reinickendorf. He cut an opening into the trim behind the seat bench, shifted the shelf upwards and removed the spare wheel, heating and air filter. He also exchanged the 13-litre fuel tank for a 2-litre canister to make space for the hidden passenger.

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“The Small Escape” shows how the BMW Isetta was turned into an escape car and how the risky border crossing played out. The thrilling history lesson was produced by director Alex Feil, camera man Khaled Mohtaseb and set designer Erwin Prieb in Hollywood blockbuster style. The props, costumes, vehicles and street sets were created in Budapest to stage a faithful 1960s Berlin setting. A checkpoint complete with wall and border strip was recreated resulting in an oppressive atmosphere which continues to grow throughout the course of the film to then culminate in a happy end. “Since their invention, automobiles have brought freedom and self-determination to humankind. Cars bring people together. This is something one should always also keep in mind in the current debate. The movie emphasises this. The moving escape story with the BMW Isetta can also be seen as a symbol of the invaluable value cars and individual mobility can have. It’s all about freedom, independence and dreams. Our movie recognises the drive and courage of the people who made this successful escape possible”, says Jens Thiemer, Head of BMW Brand Management.

On 23 May 1964, shortly before the border crossing closed on midnight, the BMW Isetta converted by Klaus-Günter Jacobi, rolled underneath the opened barrier. Shortly after crossing, he freed his friend Manfred from his hiding place behind the seat bench and took him in his arms delirious with joy. This was the only time Jacobi’s BMW Isetta was used as an escape car, but his achievement was to inspire imitators. Eight further GDR citizens managed to escape to the West over the following years in a similarly converted BMW Isetta. Today this car is on display in the Berlin Wall Museum. The movie “The Small Escape” will also be a permanent exhibit of the permanent exhibition on spectacular escape attempts.

The movie „The Small Escape“ can be watched on the BMW [Youtube](#) and other channels. The detailed story of Klaus-Günter Jacob, his BMW Isetta and the spectacular escape of his friend across the internal German border is told on www.bmw.com.

Corporate communication

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basic equipment in Germany, the ranges stated take into account differences in selected wheel and tyre sizes as well as the optional equipment. They may change during configuration.

The figures have already been calculated based on the new WLTP test cycle and adapted to NEDC for comparison purposes. In these vehicles, different figures than those published here may apply for the assessment of taxes and other vehicle-related duties which are (also) based on CO₂ emissions.

For further details of the official fuel consumption figures and official specific CO₂ emissions of new cars, please refer to the "Manual on fuel consumption, CO₂ emissions and power consumption of new cars", available at sales outlets, from Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH (DAT), Hellmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Schramhausen and at <https://www.dat.de/co2/>.

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The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2018, the BMW Group sold over 2,490,000 passenger vehicles and more than 165,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2018 was € 9,815 billion on revenues amounting to € 97,480 billion. As of 31 December 2018, the BMW Group had a workforce of 134,682 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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